

Leading with Innovation

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When Gender-Neutral is Not Good Enough in Working with Justice Involved Women



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Learning Goals

- Emphasize why gender-responsive strategies are part of evidence-based corrections
- Develop an understanding of how risk, need, responsivity look different with women offenders
- Clarify how strictly gender-neutral (i.e., male-based) assessment and classification strategies limit women offenders' likelihood of success

Evidence-Based Corrections

- Using scientific evidence to drive policy, programming, and practices for positive outcomes.
- Programs that focus on reducing recidivism will have stronger impacts in the long run for safety inside and outside.



Evidence Matters

Lives are at stake -

- *Offenders' lives*
- *Offenders' family members*
- *Correctional staff*
- *General community*

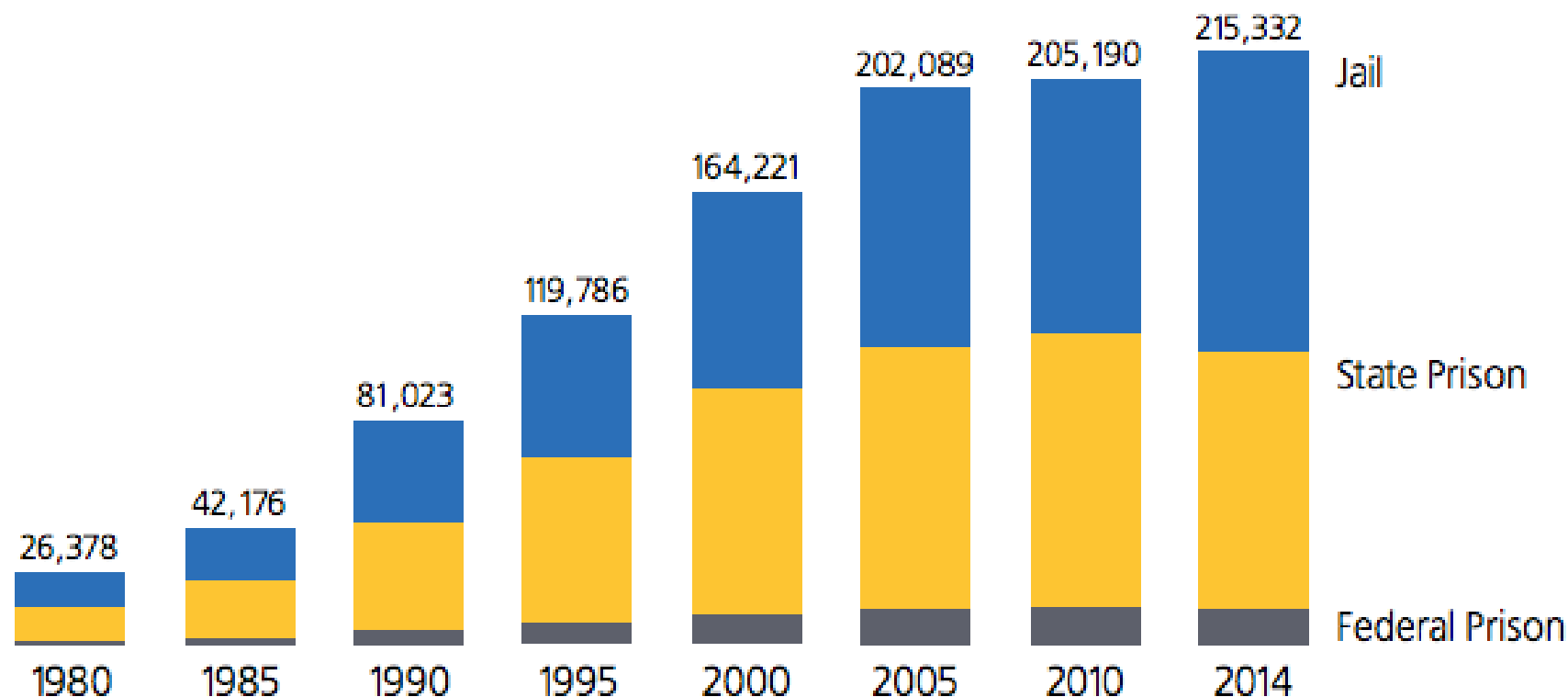


Evidence-Based Corrections: Public Safety At Its Finest

- Correctional leaders have a **professional obligation and responsibility to seek out research evidence and use this evidence** to inform their decisions.
- In human services, whether it is medicine or corrections—IGNORANCE is a dangerous thing.

700% Increase in Incarceration

Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1980-2014



Sources: *Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States, 1850-1984*. (1986); *Prison and Jail Inmates Series*. (1997-2014) Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; *Prisoners in 2014*. (2015). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

False Dichotomy

Emphasis on women in the criminal justice system is often portrayed as a losing game.

Gender-Neutral/
Evidence-Based
Practices/
“What Works”
WIN

Gender-
Responsive
LOSE

Evidence-Based and Gender-Responsive

Evidence-Based Practices

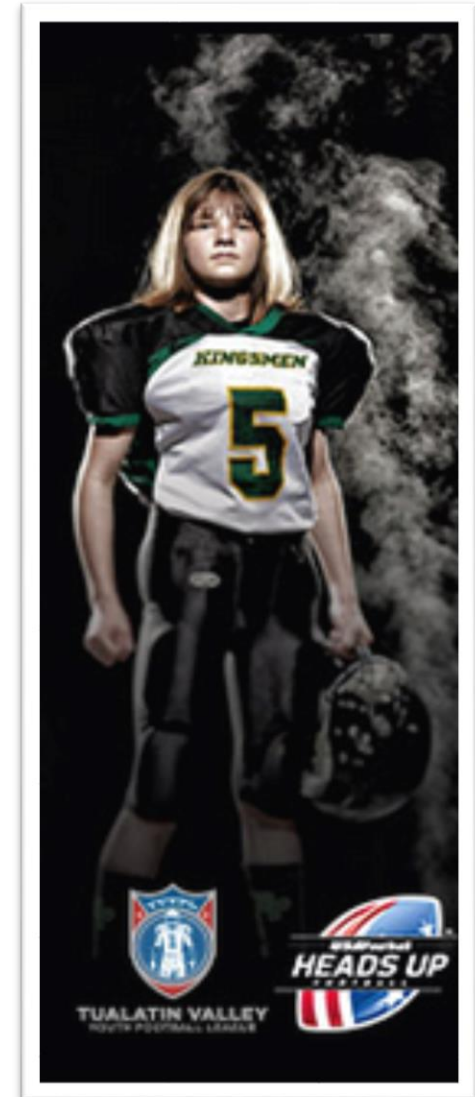
- Tested by methodologically rigorous research
- Found to be effective at reducing recidivism

Gender-Responsive Practices

- Tested by methodologically rigorous research
- Found to be effective at reducing recidivism
- **Account for differences in characteristics and life experiences of women and men in the justice system**

What Do We Mean by “Gender”?

- Sex is biologically constructed.
- Gender is socially constructed.
- Feminine and masculine social roles (gender roles).



Gender Role Expectations

- In most societies, the foundation of these behavioral expectations is patriarchal...
- ...meaning, masculine behavior is the “normative” behavior.



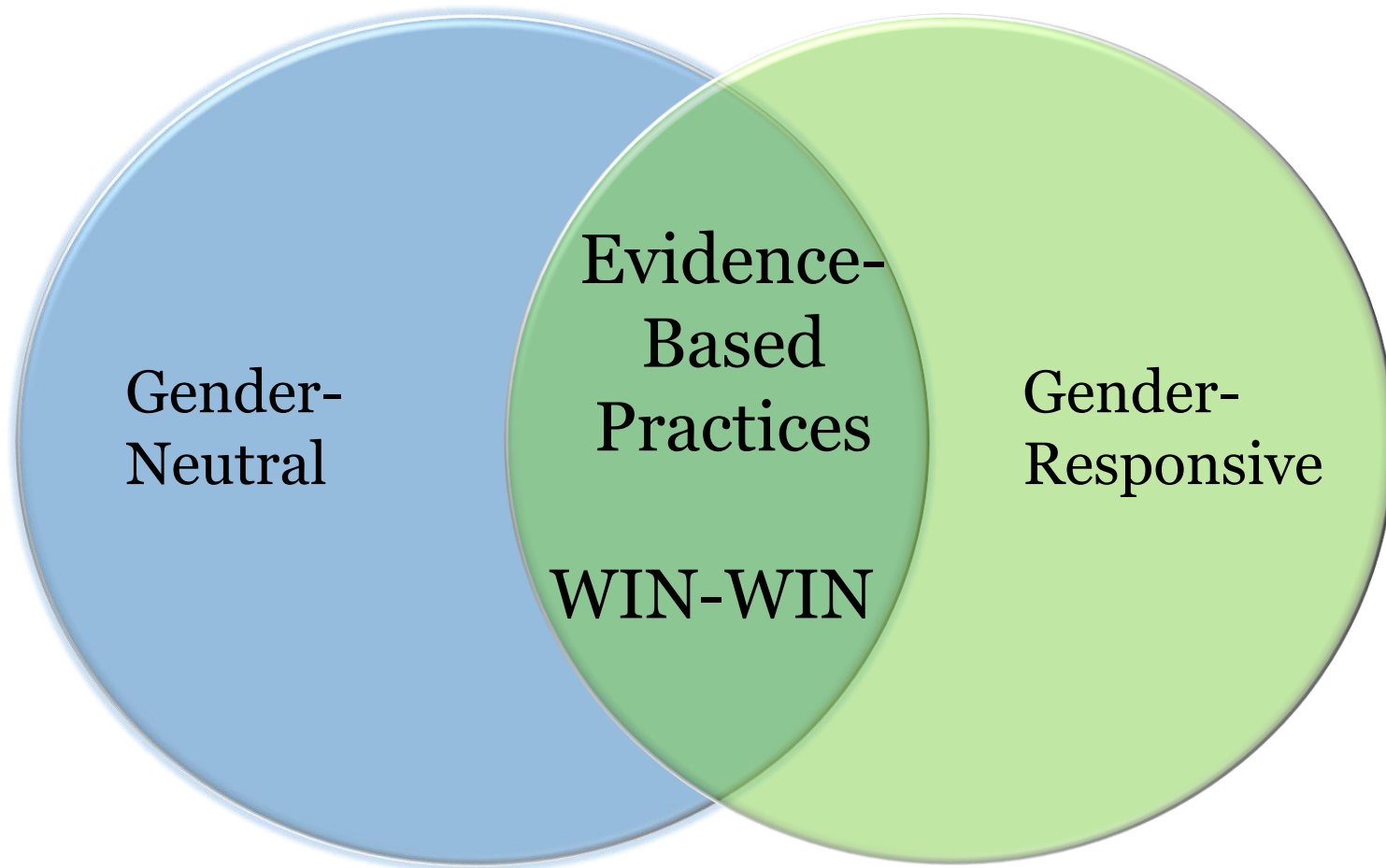
Gender-Responsive Strategies

- Use research on gendered life experiences to direct programming for women.
- Goal is to produce favorable outcomes by tailoring supervision and services to needs and strengths.

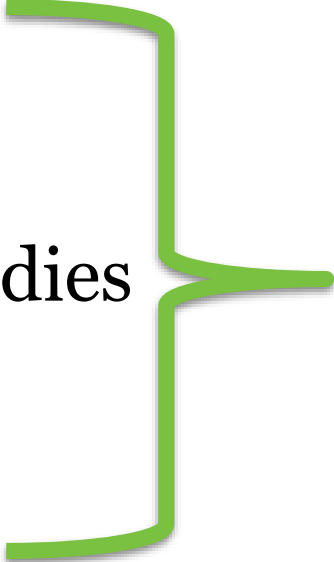


Photo credit: Noah Berger, The Center for Investigative Reporting

Gender-Responsive Strategies Part of Evidence-Based Practices



Studies Supporting Gender-Responsive Strategies

- Qualitative Population Profiles
 - Prediction Research
 - Pathways Studies
 - Risk-Assessment Studies
 - Evaluation Studies
 - Meta-Analyses
- 
- Quantitative Research

Qualitative Population Profiles

- Primarily used for exploratory purposes
- Do not involve statistical analyses, but
 - Seek to contextualize experiences
 - Understand relationships and motivations
 - Uncover trends and unpack complex processes



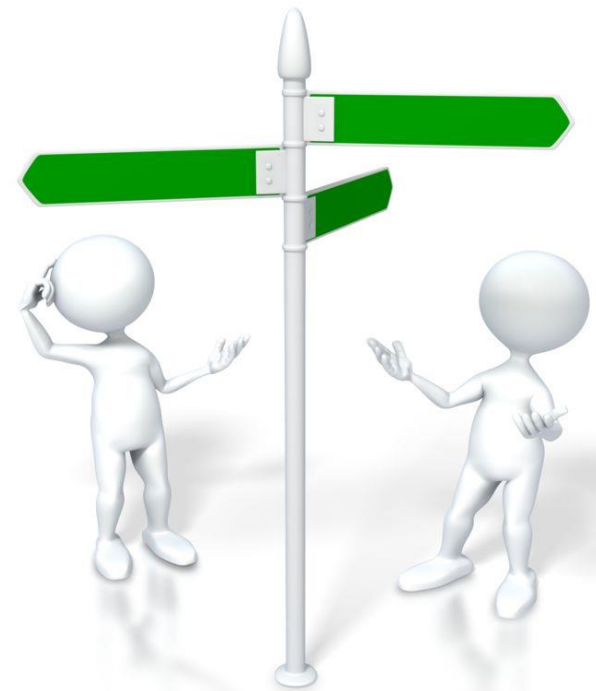
Qualitative Evidence

Consistent narratives from women that were very different compared to men:

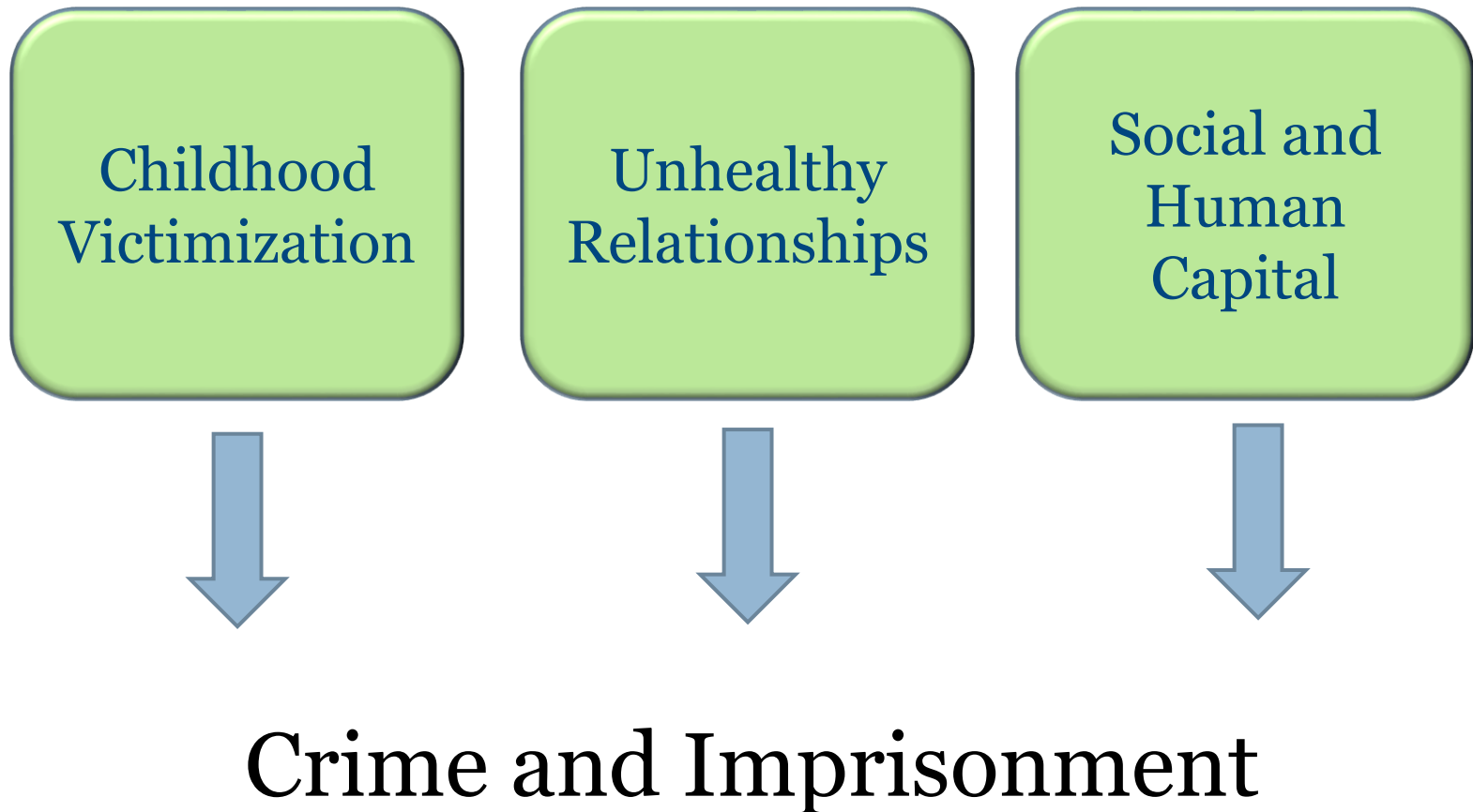
One tragedy (early abuse/trauma/neglect)
led to another (mental health problems)
which led to the need to numb/self-medicate
(substance abuse).

Prediction Research: Pathways Studies

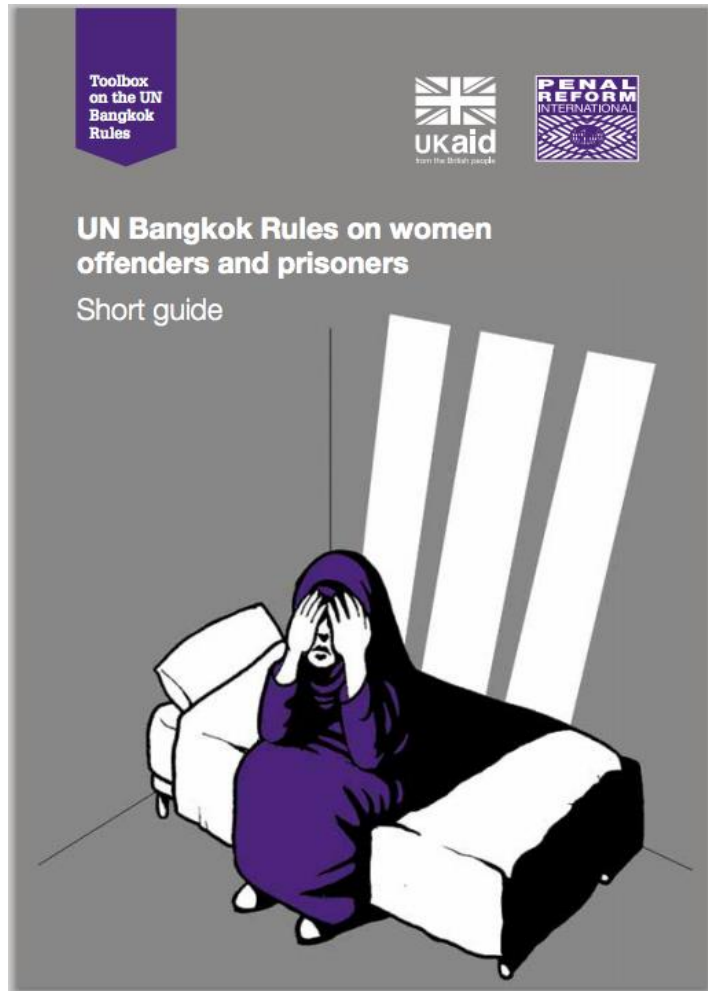
- Prediction studies are quantitative, involving numbers and structured methods.
- Pathways research quantitatively tests whether women's qualitative narratives hold up in statistical models using larger samples of women offenders.



Women's Pathways to Crime



Domestic and International Prison Reform



- Gender-Responsive Strategies, 2003 NIC (USA)
- Ministry of Justice, United Kingdom: Prison Service Order 4800 2008
- United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders

Effective Correctional Intervention

- Not all treatment programs are equally effective.
- Not every offender poses the same risk to the community.
- 3 Main Principles:
 - Risk – “who” to target
 - Need – “what” to target
 - Responsivity – “how” to target

Risks and Needs

Risk: Who

High

Medium

Low

Need: What

Antisocial
Attitudes

Antisocial
Peers

Antisocial
Personality
Traits

Responsivity: How & Barriers

Cognitive-
Behavioral
Approach

Gender

Motivation

Cognitive
Deficits

There is now enough evidence to
promote the

***Gender-Responsive Principles of
Effective Correctional Intervention***



“Risk” Manifests Differently

Risk

High

Medium

Low

- Consider the relative risk an individual poses within her peer group.
- Gender-neutral assessments appear to be less valid for women who follow gendered pathways to crime.

Psychometric Gymnastics

Cut-points and weights and
equations,
Oh My!

If statistically predictive, gender-responsive items are not included in an instrument in the first place, we will never see true and accurate measures of women's criminogenic risk.



Women Have Needs Not Asked on Gender-Neutral Assessments

- Some traditional (male-based) criminogenic needs are not as predictive with women.
- There is little research to suggest that antisocial attitudes and peers should be primary treatment targets for women.

Need

Attitudes?

Peers?

Personality?

Women Offenders' Unique Criminogenic Needs

2002: NIC & University of Cincinnati (Pat Van Voorhis) enter cooperative agreement to develop a risk and needs assessment instrument specifically designed for women.



2002 Risk and Needs Assessment

Charged with answering these questions:

If we started with women in mind,
what criminogenic needs would risk
assessments measure?

Are gender-neutral (male-centric)
assessments missing salient criminogenic
needs for women?

Risk Factors Similar for Men and Women

Criminal History

Antisocial Attitudes

Antisocial Friends

Substance Abuse

Employment/Financial

Risk Factors Predictive for Women

Depression/Anxiety

Unhealthy Relationships

Psychosis

Anger

Child Abuse

Adult Abuse

Housing Safety

Parental Stress

Strengths Predictive for Women

Self-efficacy

Family Support

Educational Assets

Parental Involvement



From “Big Four” to “Female Four”

Criminal History

Antisocial Attitudes

Antisocial Peers

Antisocial
Personality Traits

Economic Marginality

Unhealthy
Relationships

Substance Abuse

Depressive/Anxious
Symptoms

Rethinking Responsivity for Women

Responsivity:
How & Barriers

Cognitive-
Behavioral
Approach?

Gender?

Motivation

Cognitive Deficits

CBT programs still most effective but gender-responsive CBT curricula are even better

Gender is no longer limited to being a specific responsivity factor

Rather, it should be at the forefront in all of R-N-R

Gender-Responsive Responsivity

Responsivity

Cognitive-Behavioral
Approach

Gender

Motivation

Cognitive Deficits

G-R Responsivity

GR Cognitive-
Behavioral Approach

Trauma-Informed

Motivation

Cognitive Deficits

Meta-Analysis: 37 Studies & 22,000 Justice Involved Women

- Gender-responsive programs were as effective as gender-neutral programs in reducing women's recidivism.
- When limited to the 18 most methodologically rigorous studies, **G-R programs were significantly more likely to reduce women's recidivism compared to G-N programs.**

Implications for Program Audits

- CPAIs and CPCs map the wrong theoretical templates onto gender-responsive programs.
- Better to use program tools that are gender-responsive:
 - Gender-Informed Practices Assessment
 - Gender-Responsive Policy and Practices Assessment
 - Gender-Responsive Community Programs Inventory

Designed for Men - Applied to Women

Every policy and practice designed for men and applied to women affects all women 100%, not 7%.



If our goal is to reduce offending and extend positive outcomes to families, children, and communities, we have to know and address women's criminogenic needs and build upon their strengths.